

It's not just a matter of walking away

[Alex Coop](#) / Estevan Mercury

More often than not, women who find themselves in a violent relationship and consider walking away risk losing significant elements of their lives.

"If any one of us were to think about the four or five most important things in our life, when you look at someone who is trying to flee a domestic situation, they're leaving those things behind," said Christa Daku, Envision's recently appointed executive director, on the heels of the recent controversy surrounding NFL player Ray Rice, who assaulted his girlfriend, who has since become his wife, in an elevator in February this year.

A video surfaced last week showing the appalling assault on Janay Rice, resulting in a whirlwind of conversations, one of which includes her decision to marry Rice despite the physical attack she endured.

Daku said these situations are far more complicated than many people tend to believe and involve a multitude of factors.

"To have to leave children for safety, to have to leave maybe your animals, your finances, your security, all of those things impact whether or not someone reaches out for support or not. On average, seven out of 10 women who leave, leave for good," she said, but noted when a person is in a situation like that, their belief in themselves is often minimized.

"They live in fear and shame, so if they don't have the support out of that relationship that's controlling them it's very difficult to build their self-worth and self-independence," she explained.

Meeting with a counsellor is one of the best options for anyone in these scenarios, said Daku.

"In a lot of circumstances, not always, there can be some preparation done if they reach out to see a counsellor. Supports can be lined up so they can be prepared when they leave, so to speak, so they know they have people to turn to and they're not alone out there by themselves," said the executive director.

Daku acknowledged, however, the difficulties people living in rural areas face, specifically when it comes to accessing the resources that could help them during a domestic dispute.

"Isolation is one of the key factors, which is the starting phase of a domestic situation," she said, adding transportation, or a lack thereof in many cases, is another.

"Our rural little towns out in the country that are further away from city centres, it's more difficult for people living there to access services. A lot of times all of their freedoms are taken

away as well. They have no vehicle, no cellphone and no supports. The key to overcoming these situations is to have support systems, and if you don't have access to them, it's really hard to build the strength to leave," said Daku.

Envision's website, she said, is an excellent resource for anyone who has questions or concerns, or would simply like to do a little research and prepare for a potential meeting with a counsellor.

"It's also a safe website," she noted, referring to recently installed features like the the quick escape button and the ability to hide their online activity.

"There's always a fear around people finding out in our small communities, and it's important for people to know that we're a confidential service," she said. She stressed the fact that Envision doesn't subscribe to call display and accepts collect calls if someone doesn't have the capacity to make a long-distance phone call.

Daku emphasized the importance of reaching out to people who you suspect may be victims of domestic violence.

"There's no harm in asking because there may be too much shame involved, which prevents someone from coming forward with the information. If you suspect something like that is going on in someone's life, it's important to be there for them when they do decide to make a change in their life."

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